

were no naked or nest-bound young and though I only counted 254 birds we estimated that there were 300 in the vicinity.

#### PREVIOUS NESTING

Mr. Fauntleroy informed us that the site had been used by Pelicans in 1962 when he had himself observed six young birds there a week or two before Christmas. He believed that only a few birds had nested there that year.

In the following season, after a report from a boy named Williams that Pelicans were nesting on the cay, Mr. Fauntleroy's own lad visited the island and returned with the information that there were "hundreds of eggs all over the place." Mr. Fauntleroy said that knowing the tendency of boys to exaggerate he had not taken much notice, but had passed the report along to Mrs. H. W. Norris who forwarded it to the Department.

When questioned whether the cay had ever been differently vegetated, Mr. Fauntleroy said that he and his brother had set fire to it in 1959. It had then been covered with "weed" and had kept on smouldering for some days. He had never known vegetation on it different from what was there then and had not lit the fire for any particular purpose. The cay had never been grazed to his knowledge.

As the islet is unnamed representations were made to the Nomenclature Advisory Committee of the Lands Department that it be officially named Nirimba Cay, and the proposal was adopted. "Nirimba" is the name for Pelican in the language of the Bibbulman Aboriginal people of the South-West.

## CTENOTUS, A NEW GENERIC NAME FOR A GROUP OF AUSTRALIAN SKINKS

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In 1887 Boulenger placed all the lygosomatine skinks with large pentadactyl limbs and opaque lower eyelids in a subgenus, *Himulia* Gray, of *Lygosoma* Gray. In subsequent generic revisions of *Lygosoma* and allies, Malcolm Smith (1937) and Mittleman (1953) essentially adhered to Boulenger's concept of *Himulia*, though changing its name on the score of priority to *Sphenomorphus* Fitzinger. Smith treated *Sphenomorphus* as a section of *Lygosoma*, while Mittleman raised it to a full genus, comprising more than 150 forms and ranging from Africa, through southern Asia, to Australia. It was by far the largest of the genera in Mittleman's subfamily Lygosominae, and Mittleman admitted the possibility of its being polyphyletic.

The genus *Sphenomorphus*, so conceived, has numerous species in Australia, which exhibit considerable diversity in morphology and behaviour. Within it, however, there is a sharply definable group of species whose relationship to the remainder is not especially close, and which merit generic separation thus:

## *Ctenotus* gen. nov.

**Type-species:** *Laeerta taeniolata* Shaw 1790, in White's *J. Voy. N.S.W.*, p. 245, pl. 32 (fig. 1).

**Other nominal species:** *Hinulia greyii* Gray, *H. inornata* Gray, *H. muelleri* Fischer, *H. spaldingi* Macleay, *Lygosoma brevipunguis* Kinghorn, *L. eolletti* Boul., *L. concolor* Glauert, *L. dorsale* Boul., *L. fischeri* Boul., *L. leae* Boul., *L. leonhardii* Sternfeld, *L. lesueurii* Dum. & Bib., *L. ocellatum* Boul., *L. quattorodecimlineatum* Sternfeld, *L. schomburgkii* Peters, *L. strauchii* Boul., *L. taeniata* Mitchell, *Sphenomorphus schervilli* Loveridge, *Tiliqua australis* Gray, *T. essingtonii* Gray.

**Diagnosis:** Distinguished from *Sphenomorphus* Fitzinger by the presence of ear lobules and the pattern of longitudinal stripes or rows of spots rather than vaguely transverse bands or irregular spotting and variegation.

**Description:** Active, diurnal, terrestrial, small to moderately large skinks with strong pentadactyl limbs which overlap when adpressed. The tail is long and tapering and not so thick basally as in *Sphenomorphus*. The eye is large, and the lower eyelid completely movable and covered with small opaque scales. The ear aperture is fairly large and protected anteriorly by 2-5 white lobules. The nostril is pierced in a large nasal shield which is usually in contact with its opposite number or narrowly separate. No supranasals or postnasals. The prefrontals are large and in contact with each other or narrowly separate. The frontal is large (about as long as the combined length of the frontoparietals and interparietal) and narrow, its sides converging backward. The frontoparietals are paired and the parietals are in contact behind the free interparietal. There are 2-4 pairs of nuchals, 4 (rarely 3 or 5) supraoculars, 7 or 8 upper labials and a pair of enlarged preanal scales. The body scales are completely smooth, smallest on the sides and largest down the middle of back. The dorsum and sides of body and base of tail are usually boldly patterned with longitudinal black, brown, yellow or white stripes or rows of spots or ocelli, against a background of some shade of brown.

**Distribution:** Continental Australia and extreme southern New Guinea.

**Derivation of name:** From the Greek stems *kten-* (comb) and *ot-* (ear), in allusion to the sharp auricular lobules.

**Comments:** The larger species of *Ctenotus* have sometimes been confused with the striped, smooth-scaled species of *Egernia*. The complete separation of the parietals by the large interparietal will distinguish all *Egernia* from all *Ctenotus*.

## REFERENCES

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